



Finch, 1951

WDE-428; DE-328

Joseph Warren Finch, Jr., was born 8 March 1920 in Chicago, Illinois. He was appointed ensign in the Naval Reserve on 28 May 1941. He was killed in action in the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, 13 November 1942, when his ship USS *Laffey* (DD-459) was sunk. Lieutenant (junior grade) Finch shared posthumously in the Presidential Unit Citation awarded his ship for its outstanding performance in action against the Japanese in the southwest Pacific from 15 September until its loss.

Edsall-Class Destroyer Escort

Displacement: 1,253 tons standard; 1,102 tons full load

Length: 306' oa

Beam: 36'7"

Draft: 10' 5' full load

Machinery: 2-shaft Fairbanks Morse diesels, 6,000 bhp

Range: 10,800 nm at 12 knots

Top Speed: 21 knots

Complement: 186

Armament: 3-3"/50; 2-40mm; 8-20mm; 3-21" torpedo tubes; 2 depth charge tracks; 8 depth charge projectors; 1 hedge hog.

History:

The second *Finch* (DE-328) was launched 28 August 1943 by Consolidated Steel Corp., Orange, Tex.; sponsored by Miss Grace Gushing, fiancée of Lieutenant (junior grade) Finch; and commissioned 13 December 1943, Lieutenant Commander A. H. Nienau, USNR, in command.

Finch arrived at Curacao, Netherlands West Indies, 7 March 1944, and from that time until 31 May, twice escorted convoys of tankers laden with vital petroleum products to Casablanca and Algiers. Extensive training in the Caribbean and in Casco Bay, Maine, prepared her for her departure from Norfolk 28 July screening shipping to Naples for the assault on Southern France. The escort ship returned from this voyage to New York 31 August.

Between 29 September 1944 and 8 May 1945, *Finch* sailed as escort to five convoys from New York and Boston to ports in Great Britain. Upon the end of the European phase of the war, the escort ship prepared for Pacific Fleet duty, and arrived at Pearl Harbor 12 July. She sailed on to Guam, where on 13 August she joined a carrier task force, which upon the cessation of hostilities was ordered into Leyte 17 August. Serving in the Far East until 1 April 1946, *Finch* took part in occupation activities including the evacuation of Allied men held as prisoners of war in Korea. For 4 months she was based at Hong Kong, calling at many ports in China, and carrying mail to Okinawa. She returned home by way of the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, thus concluding a round-the-world cruise with her arrival at Charleston, South Carolina, 29 May. *Finch* was decommissioned and placed in reserve 4 October 1946.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the Coast Guard needed vessels to augment its overly committed cutter fleet to man new ocean weather stations in the Pacific. The Navy turned over a number of destroyer escorts, which the Coast Guard commissioned as cutters. The old war-horses had served as convoy escorts in World War II, 33 of which had been manned by Coast Guard crews during the war, although *Finch* had not been one of them. These destroyer escorts were refitted with a shelter on the stern for weather balloon storage and armed with depth charges and a variety of anti-aircraft weapons. The first two to join the Coast Guard fleet were the *Koiner* and the *Falgout*. Once commissioned, the new cutters underwent shakedown training under the supervision of the Navy and then sailed to their new homeports. From 24 August 1951 to 23 April 1954, *Finch* was on loan to the Coast Guard and in

commission as USCGC *Finch* (WDE-428), under the command of CDR G. R. Boyce, Jr., USCG with a crew of only 108 men. She served on weather station duty along the west coast and in the Far East during the Korean War. Upon her return to the Navy, she was converted to a radar picket escort vessel.

She was reclassified DER-328 on 17 August 1956, and recommissioned 17 August 1956. Seattle was *Finch's* home port from 17 December 1956 through 10 September 1958, as she made regular patrols on seaborne radar early warning duty. She arrived at Pearl Harbor 16 September 1958 for similar duty until 16 May 1960, then sailed for San Francisco, her home port for barrier operations through 1962. She was decommissioned for the final time on 1 October 1973 and was stricken from the Naval Register on 1 February 1974.

Sources:

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

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